Home Page
The Bible
OT Overview
NT Overview
OT Books
NT Books
OT History
NT History
OT Studies
Pentateuch Studies
History Books Studies
Studies in the Prophets
NT Studies
Studies in the Gospels
Acts and Letters Studies
Revelation Studies
Inductive Study
Types of Literature
Geography
Early Church
Museums
Historical Documents
Difficult Questions
How to Preach
Teaching
SBS Staff

Julian's books

Contact Julian

Print

Search for page by title (auto-completes)

Advanced search
+ Open

Translate into
Select Language
Powered by Google Translate

Josephus, Bede, Tacitus: Famine predicted by Agabus

Related pages

Paul's collection for the saints Introduction to 1 Corinthians
Introduction to 2 Corinthians Introduction to Romans

Introduction

In the Book of Acts, the prophet Agabus predicted a famine would affect the whole world. *"At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius."* (Acts 11:27-28). This famine is recorded by a number of different historians, including Josephus, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Bede, and Tacitus.

Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews

Now her (Queen Helena, queen mother of Adiabene, a convert to Judaism) *coming was of very great advantage to the people of Jerusalem; for whereas a famine did oppress them at that time, and many people died for want of what was necessary to procure food withal, queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of corn, and others of them to Cyprus, to bring a cargo of dried figs* ... (Ant 20:2:5)

Then came Tiberius Alexander as successor to Fadus ... Under these procurators that great famine happened in Judea, in which queen Helena brought corn in Egypt at a great expense, and distributed it to those that were in want. (Ant 20:5:2)

Fadus was governor of Judea from AD 44 - 46, and was replaced by Tiberius Julius Alexander who was governor from AD 46 - 48. This dates the famine to the year AD 46.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

AD 46: *In this year, Claudius, the second Roman emperor to invade Britain, put much of the island under his control and added the Orkneys to Rome's kingdom. This took place in the fourth year of his rule. In this same year, a great famine in Syria took place which Luke mentions in his book, 'The Acts of the Apostles'.*

AD 47: *During the fourth year of his rule, there was a great famine in Syria which Luke mentions in his book 'The Acts of the Apostles'.*

Bede: History of the English Church and People

He (Claudius) *brought the campaign* (to conquer Britain) *to a close in the fourth year of his reign, and in the forty-sixth year after the birth of our Lord. This was the year in which a very serious famine occurred in Syria, which is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as having been foretold by the prophet Agabus.* (Bede 1:3)

Suetonius: Lives of the Twelve Caesars

Suetonius described how Emperor Claudius was once pelted with curses and stale crusts because droughts had caused shortages of grain in the city of Rome. *"Once, after a series of droughts had caused a scarcity of grain, a mob stopped Claudius in the Forum and pelted him with curses and state crusts that he had difficulty in regaining the Palace by a side-door; as a result he took all possible steps to import grain, even during the winter months."* (Suetonius. Claudius 18:2)

Tacitus: Annals

A vision that came to him at night was the reason charges were filed against the man. In this dream, he claimed to have seen Claudius crowned with a wreath made of wheat, the ears of which were folded downward. And from this vision, he predicted lean harvests to come. (Annals 11:4)

Tacitus also described the riots caused by grain shortages in Rome during the reign of Claudius. *"Scanty crops too, and consequent famine were regarded as a token of calamity. Nor were there merely whispered complaints; while Claudius was administering justice, the populace crowded round him with a boisterous clamour and drove him to a corner of the forum, where they violently pressed on him till he broke through the furious mob with a body of soldiers"* (Tacitus. Annals 12:43)

Related pages

Paul's collection for the saints Introduction to 1 Corinthians
Introduction to 2 Corinthians Introduction to Romans